

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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Organization

1. Berlag (Beregovyye lageri - Coastal Camps) was the organization which controlled all camps for political prisoners in the Kolyma area. The chief of Berlag was either Borisenkov (fnu) or Alekseenko (fnu). Yuzlag (Yugo-zapadnyye lageri - Southwestern Camps) was the organization controlling camps for criminals. Yuzlag and Berlag camps were sometimes in the same areas; the Lazo area had both types of camps. There was a Sevlag organization and some camps in the Indigirka region. Only criminals were sent to the Chukotsk Peninsula.
2. Criminals were usually better treated than political prisoners. They had a pass (propusk) which they left at the camp when they went out. They could go to work and move freely in the town of Lazo and its environs without escort. They always received some pay for their work.
3. Before 1947, political prisoners had gone to work without escort, but in that year there was a rebellion on a ship in Nagayev Harbor; political prisoners blew up a ship carrying 20,000 tons of ammonal. The chief of Dalstroy was relieved, and all political prisoners were under escort whenever they left camp, except within a mining or factory area where they were working. Political prisoners had no documents; their

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only identification was a number on their caps and the backs of their shirts or jackets.

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4. Political prisoners were convicted under articles of the Soviet criminal codes, including Article 58 of the RSFSR Criminal Code, which applied to espionage.

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5. Each labor camp had a chief, and under him there were normally three sections as follows:

- a. The Production and Planning Division (Proizvodstvennaya i planovaya chast - PPCh), which organized the work details. The section was headed by an officer.
- b. The Medical Division (San-chast), which was normally headed by a free doctor, with prisoners serving as assistants.
- c. The Cultural and Education Division (Kulturno-vospitatelnaya chast - KVCh), also headed by an officer, which produced propaganda concerning work, organized work competitions with other camps, and was in charge of the library and films.

6. In Kanon, there were two camps, one for political prisoners and the other for criminals called "bytaviki". There were 1,700 political prisoners at the end of 1949, but by June 1953 there were only 900. There were about 700 criminals in 1949, and some 300 in June 1953. The composition in the Berlag camp was follows: 10 percent Germans, 30 percent Ukrainians; 25 percent Balts; 10 - 15 percent Hungarians; 5 percent Rumanians; the remaining 15-20 percent was made up of Czechs, Yugoslavs, Poles, and six or seven Soviets who had been PWs in Germany. The first chief of the camp was Major Khorin (fnu).

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Health and Sanitation

7. The camp at Kanon had a small hospital with 19 beds. There were one Soviet female doctor, a Soviet woman dentist, a woman pharmacist, and a Hungarian prisoner doctor. The most prevalent disease in the camp was scurvy, and many prisoners died of high blood pressure. Silicosis was common among the miners, who could never work more than two years. Syphilis existed only among the free prisoners and was quite common, since the Soviets are extremely promiscuous. Soviet immorality. There were a large number of prostitutes in Seymchan, some of them only about 12 years old. Penicillin was plentiful but was reserved for free persons.
8. For the whole of Camp Kanon, there was only one very primitive toilet. It was in a separate barracks and accommodated 12 people. Waste matter was removed mostly in winter when it was frozen and dumped near or into the river. The bottom was also cleaned out occasionally in the summer.

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9. The drinking water in Camp Kanon came from a well that was 80 m deep. There were three Komsomolska pumps which could each pump 250 liters per second or a total of 750 liters. Normally, these pumps did not work all at the same time. The water was taken to the camp in a water wagon and distributed to the kitchen and the barracks. The pumping station also served the concentration factory.
10. One kitchen prepared food for the whole camp. In the kitchen, there were three or four large kettles into which all the food was dumped. The normal daily ration was as follows:

Grain (barley, groats (krupa), or another kind): - 200 grams.
 Cheese or butter: - 50 grams.
 Fish: - 100 grams.
 Bread: - 800 grams in 1951; after 1952, 1 kg.
 Prisoners in solitary confinement received 400 grams of bread with a jug of water per day.

11. In the Kolyma region, prisoners did not suffer from lice (vosh) or fleas, but mosquitoes were prevalent in June and July. Each prisoner had two sets of underwear which was disinfected by steam every ten days. Five or six prisoners were employed in the laundry. Every ten days, the prisoner had a shower, although in winter only two liters of water per man were allowed.

Propaganda Media

12. [redacted] Until 1952, prisoners had films once a month and they were free. After May 1952, when political prisoners received some cash, they could see films every day but an admission of 2.50 rubles was charged. The Soviet films always revolved around kolkhos and sovkhos life. Most prisoners found these films very boring and avoided them. Among films shown were a documentary on the Donbas Combine, a propaganda piece about Red China, and a film called "Maksimka" about a little negro mistreated by Americans. There were many Italian, French, and East German films.
13. Newspapers like Pravda were available in camp. Normally they were censored. However, once, by some mistake prisoners got a chance to read President Eisenhower's speech of 16 April 1953. It produced great excitement among them, and the Soviet officers confiscated all the available copies. The next day, when Pravda's answer to the speech arrived, the officers tried to distribute it widely but the prisoners were not interested.
14. The camp had a loudspeaker which relayed Radio Moscow, Khabarovsk, and Magadan. Prisoners heard only the Soviet side of the news, but they were not convinced by it. For instance, when they heard about the revolt of German workers in June 1953, they immediately thought that it had been caused by raising the work norms, and did not believe the Soviet story that American saboteurs had started the revolt.

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15. Following are some political jokes and other stories which circulated in the camps:

- a. On kolkhozy: Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin were riding in a jeep to Yalta. A cow barred the road. Roosevelt and Churchill told the cow to move, but without success. Thereupon, Stalin told the cow, in Russian, that she would be put into a kolkhoz unless she cleared the road immediately. The cow was frightened and ran. When Roosevelt and Churchill asked Stalin, what he had said, he replied: "I told the cow she would be taken out of the kolkhoz unless she moved immediately".
- b. On Korea: An American flier was shot down over North Korea. After his interrogation, a small, dark Korean was presented to him as the man who had shot him down. The American, who spoke Russian, addressed the Korean pilot to compliment him, but the man could speak only Korean. So the American turned to his captors and told them this was not the right man. He had heard the enemy pilot through his radio and that man spoke only Russian.
- c. On unemployment in the US: A Soviet film showed scenes of unemployment in the U.S.: one of a farmer with a big placard saying he was unemployed and the other spoke of a worker who had toured the whole U. S. in search of work. The prisoners noticed the good clothes of the farmer and said that the farmer must be very lucky to be both unemployed and so well dressed. As for the worker, they asked how an unemployed worker could afford a car and the gasoline to go about looking for work.
- d. Ukrainians: When an American delegation of Ukrainians came to Kharkov for a visit to their homeland in 1947 or 1948, the Ukrainian prisoners said they were wasting their time since the majority of Ukrainians were in the Kolyma region.
- e. Volga-Don Canal: A few prisoners who had been employed on the Volga-Don Canal told source that for the inauguration ceremonies a special building was erected and painted white. As there was a forced labor camp nearby, the fences and watchtowers were torn down and the barracks painted white to make them look like newly erected buildings for the great celebration.
- f. On poverty in the Soviet Union: Prisoners were allowed to write only two letters a year. One Ukrainian used to write to a friend of his who had been very kind to him. The letters took about eight months. Then the correspondence stopped for a long time, and finally the prisoner received a letter in which his friend informed him that he had been too poor to buy a stamp, which cost 40 kopeks.

16. The dread of going to Kolyma or doing work in the cold weather was so great that many cases of self-mutilation occurred.

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[redacted] In Camp Kanon, there were five cases of self-mutilation: A Korean, two Azerbaydzhani, a Latvian, and a Ukrainian. These people would offer bread to other prisoners to have one, two, or three of their fingers cut off.

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17. The Soviet people had great sympathy for the prisoners. Whenever the prisoners passed through a town, people tried to give them bread, wine, or fruit, even when the guards attempted to prevent it. The sympathetic attitude of the Soviet people stemmed from the fact that in every Soviet family at least one member or close relative had been similarly convicted and sentenced.

18. Escape from the Kolyma region was almost impossible and very rarely attempted. One reason was that the hunters in the Yakutsk region were paid a premium of 200 rubles and given extra food for turning in an escapee. [redacted] a man who was caught, brought back, almost beaten to death, and then moved to a hospital.

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